

Living her dream and making St Maarten proud, Nicole Chantal de Weever is a true original. Born in Cay Hill, she is a graduate of St Maarten Academy, Motiance Dance School and New York University Tisch School of the Arts and now a rising star on Broadway dancing in *Fela!*, the true story of the Nigerian musician and civil rights activist Fela Kuti who devoted his life to the struggle for freedom and whose soulful Afrobeat rhythms ignited a generation.

Under the visionary direction and choreography of Tony Award winner Bill T. Jones and with the financial backing of mega-stars Jay-Z and Will Smith, *Fela!* leads with its hips as a gorgeous ensemble of women enchant the audience with their stunning African dance performances. Playing the role of Adeola, one of Fela's twenty-seven wives, Nicole says the performance packs a strong message. "I love being apart of the play because I believe in making positive change in the world and I strongly believe that it takes courage to do so," she says between rehearsals at the Eugene O'Neil Theatre, "the musical leaves the audience thinking about how important it is to take personal responsibility for making changes in the world and how important it is to have courage even when you stand alone,"

Her blockbuster performance has earned rave reviews and an impressive collection of accolades including "Special Ambassador" recognition from the St Maarten Tourist Bureau. "Ms de Weever is an example of how talented the youth of St Maarten are and serves as a role model for others of how far they can reach once they focus on developing their talents," said Frans Richardson, commissioner of tourism.

She is also the honored recipient of the 2010 Fred & Adele Astaire Award for her stellar performance in *Fela!* She's danced in the West Side Story World Tour that took her all over the world including to theatres in Germany, Italy, Thailand and



Japan, performed in Angelique Kidjo's music video with Bono and John Legend and although she has rubbed shoulders

with superstars like Alicia Keys, Sting and Janet Jackson, she remains humble. "I always felt like a small fish in a big pond, but winning the Astaire award reassured me it really does not matter how small of a place I may be from, my talent speaks for itself among the greats in the business." Paying it forward, Nicole is a shining example to other young dancers who aspire to perform on Broadway. "Inspiring youth is very important and dear to me," she says, "I feel like I am an example that proves dreams can become a reality if you are determined to succeed."

The sky is the limit for this dancing dynamo and although her busy schedule takes her away from St Maarten, home is never far from her heart, "St Maarten is definitely in my future because it is home and will always be home."